

PREVENTING RESIDENTIAL FIRE-RELATED INJURIES

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- In 2001, more than 396,500 home fires in the United States claimed the lives of an estimated 3,140 people and injured another 15,575.
- Residential fires accounted for 77% of fire-related injuries and 84% of fire-related deaths in 2001.
- Persons at greatest risk of sustaining fire-related injuries are children ages 5 years and younger and adults ages 65 and older; African Americans, American Indian and Alaska Natives, rural dwellers, and persons living in substandard housing or older manufactured homes.
- In 2001, residential fires resulted in direct property damage totaling \$5.6 billion.
- About half of home fire deaths occurred in homes without working smoke alarms.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

Since 1998, CDC has funded smoke alarm installation and fire safety education programs in high-risk communities—those with fire death rates higher than state and national averages and median household incomes below the poverty level. An informal sample of program homes found that 570 lives have been potentially saved thus far. Program staff have canvassed more than 277,000 homes and installed over 202,000 long-lasting smoke alarms in high-risk homes, targeting households with children ages five years and younger and adults ages 65 years and older. Fire safety messages have reached millions of people as a result of these programs. CDC funded 14 states from 1998 to 2001. Based on the success of these programs, CDC awarded five-year cooperative agreements to 13 states in 2001 to install long-lasting, lithium-powered smoke alarms and to provide fire-safety education in homes in high-risk communities. They include: Alabama, Alaska, Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington. In 2002, 3 additional states (Arkansas, Massachusetts, and Montana) were awarded funding for these activities bringing the total number of CDC-funded states to 16.

Example of Program in Action

CDC is partnering with the U.S. Fire Administration, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, and a number of nongovernmental organizations to eliminate deaths from residential fires by 2020. Joint activities include research examining the risk factors for residential fire-related injuries; data collection and analysis to track trends and progress; CDC's smoke alarm installation and fire safety education project; and the recent development of 12 state Civilian Fire Safety Corps whose primary purpose is to conduct community-based fire safety education. The corps is comprised of volunteers who deliver programs in schools, senior centers, and other public settings.

CDC's fire prevention efforts also include funding five states to implement and evaluate curriculum developed by the National Fire Protection Association, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, and CDC to teach older adults how to prevent fires and falls; developing a National Fire Risk Factor Survey to collect nationally representative data on the causes, risk factors, and health outcomes related to residential fires; directing a study on the sequences of events and human behaviors that lead to home fire injuries and deaths; and partnering with the U.S. Fire Administration to evaluate fire safety and prevention programs.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Eliminating deaths from residential fires can be achieved. By expanding existing smoke alarm installation and fire safety education programs and applying lessons learned from an evaluation of current programs to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of community-based programs, the United States can reduce and eradicate residential fire-related deaths.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

January 2004